

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-14 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 IO-14
ACDA-12 AGRE-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00
CIAE-00 COME-00 DLOS-09 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08
EPA-04 SOE-02 DOE-15 FMC-02 TRSE-00 H-02 INR-10
INT-05 JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-02 OMB-01
PA-02 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20 EA-12 /212 W
-----031401 191438Z /46

R 180940Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9543
INFO AMEMBASSY BANJUL
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY PAAIA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY BISSAU
USINT HAVANA

UNCLAS NOUAKCHOTT 1348

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIS, EWWT, MARR, MASS, PARM, PBOR, PLOS, MR
SUBJ: OFFSHORE FISHING

REFS: A. STATE 90967 B. RABAT 2428 (NOTAL) C. NOUAKCHOTT 27778

1. FOLLOWING RESPONSES KEYED TO QUESTISNS POSED REF A.
A. OFFSHORE FISHING IS MAURITANIA'S SECOND MOST IMPORTANT EXPORT
INDUSTRY ATER MINERALS. IT ACCOUNTS FOR 9 PERCENT OF EXPORT TOTAL.
WHILE ACCURATE ATATIVTB ARE UNABAILABLE, APPROXIMATELY 80,000 TONS
OF FISH WERE ESTIMATED EXPORTED IN 1977, AND OVER 70,000 TONS WERE
UNLOADED FOR PROCESSING ON SHORE. MOST OF CATCH IS EXPORTED, ALTHOUGH
SOME IS CONSUMED BY COASTAL VILLAGES AND SOLD UNPROCESSED IN NOUAKCHO
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FISHERIES QUESTIONS CAN HAVE POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS, ESPECIALLY
THOSE INVOLVING THE COASTLINE OF THE PORTION OF THE FORMER SPANISH
SAHARA NOW CLAIMED BY MAURITANIA, SINCE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT
WOULD LIKE TO REGARD PUCH RECORDS AS TACIT ACCEPTANCE OF MAURITANIAN
SOVEREIGNTY IN SAHARA (SEE REF B FOR A DISCUSSION OF SUCH
ASSUMPTION IN THE CASE OF MOROCCO).
B. POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED FISHING IS CONSIDERED QUITE HIGH, WITH ONE

STUDY ESTIMATING 2.8 MILLION TONS OF FISH IN MAURITANIAN WATERS. SOME CONCERN ABOUT OVER-FISHING HAS BEEN EXPRESSED, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO CERTAIN SPECIES, SUCH AS OCTOPUS, AND GIRM FISHING MINISTER ABDALLAHI OULD ISMAEL HAS NOTED DESIRABILITY OF LIMITING HARVEST TO 400 TONS PER YEAR.

C. MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT REGULATES FISHING THROUGH SERIES OF AT LEAST 20 BILWRERAL AGREEMENTS, WHICH ARE PERIODICALLY RENEWED. AGREEMENTS GENERALLY CALL FOR PAYMENTS BASED ON GROSS METRIC TONNAGE OF FISH CAUGHT, AGREEMENT TO LAND A PERCENTAGE OF FOOD FOR PROCESS-ING AT NOUADHIBOU, AND TRAING MAURITANIANS IN FISHING. CONFORMITY WIT H

AGREEMENTS IS MONITORED, SOMEWHAT HAPHAZARDLY, BY MODEST PATROL FACILITIES BASED AT NOUAEHIBOU CONSISTING OF TWO SOVIET-SUPPLIED PATROL BOATS AND THREE ADDITIONAL NAVAL CRAFT OF UNDETERMINED ORIGIN. GIRM IS FULLY AWARE OF , AND FREELY ADMITS TO , INADEQUACY OF ENFORCEMENT MEASURES.

D. POACHING IS CONSIDERED A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM, AND GIRM ESTIMATES THAT ONLY 2 PERCENT OF THE CATCH OFF MAURITANIAN SHORES IS REPORTED. SEIZURES OCCUR WIT MZAULARITY (73, IN 1977) AND, DESPITE STIFF FINES, HAVE APPARENTLY NOT BEEF ENOUGH OF A DETERRENT TO SIGNIFICANT- LY REDUCE ILLEGAL ACTIVITY. GIRM WILL SOON BE DISTRIBUTING A NEW LAW, WHICH WILL PROVIDE FOR MORE FLEXIBILITY IN PENALTIES, INCLUDING POSSIBILITY OF ACTUAL SEIZURES OF VESSELS. ACCORDING TO MAURITANIAN DIRECTOR OF FISHING AHMED MAHMOUD CHERIF, NEIGHBORING STATES (I.E., MOROCCO) HAVE MUCH MORE LATITUDE IN DEALING WITH SEIZUR ES,

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AND FREQUENTLY REPAINT A SEIZED VESSEL AND CHANGE ITS FLAGS WITHOUT RECOURSE TO TROUBLESOME LITIGATION. NEW LAW WILL ALLOW NEGOTIA- TIONS WITH CMPANIES FOLLOWED BY STIFFER FINES AND/OR EXPROPRIATION OF VESSELS AND CARGO, DEPENDING ON OFFENSE.

E. MAURITANIANS HAVE FREQUENTLY SEIZED SPANISH FISHING VESSELS, ESPECIALLY THOSE OPERATION OUT OF CANARIES, AND IN NOVEMBER 19 ?. SEIZED A CUBAN FISHING VESSEL. ON THAT OCCASION A \$1.3 MILLION FINE WAS LEVIED, BUT REPORTEDLY RESCINDED AFTER PERSONAL INTERNENTION OF IRAQIS ON CUBAN BEHALF. (REF C). IN OCTOBER, MORE THAN 300 SPANISH FISHING VESSELS RETURNED TO PORT IN THE CANARIES FOLLOWING SERIES OF ATTACKS BY MAURITANIAN PATROL BOATS. POLISARIO GUERILLAS FIGHTING MAURITANIANS AND MOROCCANS IN SAHARA HAVE EVEN DEMONSTRATED CERTAIN IMPROVISATIONAL ABILITIES IN ENFORCEMENT FIELD, SEIZING SPANISH BOAT OFF FORMER SPANISH SAHARA AND TRANSPORTING HOSTAGES TO ZOUERATE.

F. MAURITANIA PRESENTLY CLAIMS A MARITIME ZONE OF 200 NAUTICAL MILES, FORST 70 OF WHICH ARE CONSIDERED TERRITORIAL WATERS AND NEXT 130 EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE.

G. GIRM REGARDS EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE JUST MENTIONED AS ONE IN WHICH ALL FISHING IS SUBJECT TO AGREEMENT.

2. GIRM QUITE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL EFFORT AND DIRECTOR

OF FISHING CHERIF POINTS TO PARTICIPATION IN THREE REGIONAL CONFER-
ENCES WITH SENGABN GUINEA- BISSAU, CAPE VERDE AND GAMBDA WHC EVIDENCE
OF THIS FACT. KRYZA

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